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ABSTRACT

In response to legislative mandate, the Office of the Chancellor for California Community Colleges convened a Task Force on Community College Finance to examine and recommend funding alternatives, focusing on general apportionments. This report provides background on: (1) the formation and work of the task force; (2) the conceptual structure proposed by the task force for a program-based funding model using five categories of programs and services (i.e., instruction, instructional services and libraries, student services, maintenance and operations, and institutional support); (3) the concept of category funding standards which represent the normative level of funding for each category based on some empirical calibration of constituent elements; and (4) the problems arising from the lack of detailed cost data. Next, task force findings are presented in a summary consisting of a list of the conditions that have contributed to the financial instability and blurred image of the California community colleges and a summary of the task force's arguments in support of a comprehensive funding overhaul. Appendices contain the executive summary of the task force's report, which includes an illustration of support categories, workload measures and standards, a discussion of implementation costs, and a summary of recommendations; a statement of the principles of community college finance adopted by the task force; and a list of task force members. (EJV)

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Board of Governors of the
California Community Colleges
September 10, 1987

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE FINANCE REFORM

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For Information

Summary

AB 3409 (Hayden) Chapter 1465, Statutes of 1986, required the Chancellor to convene a task force to examine and develop alternative funding mechanisms for the community colleges. This group's six-months' effort was reported to the Chancellor in June.

This item presents segments of that report for the Board's information. There are three appendices:

Appendix A -- the executive summary of the task force's report and recommendations,

Appendix B -- the community college finance principles adopted by the task force, and

Appendix C -- the members of the group.

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Background

A part of the broad review of California's community colleges undertaken during the last two years has been the work of the Task Force on Community College Finance Reform, AB 3409 (Chapter 1465, Statutes of 1986). AB 3409 required the Chancellor to "convene a broad-based, short-term task force on community college financing reform which shall include, but not be limited to, representatives of the Master Plan Review Commission, the Department of Finance, the Legislative Analyst, the Controller, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), local community college districts, and appropriate constituent groups." Although the Chancellor was represented (see Appendix C for task force membership), it should be noted that neither he nor the Board were named participants. Ms. Jane Wellman from CPEC was appointed chair. Later, during Ms. Wellman's maternity leave, Dr. Tom Van Groningen, Yosemite District CEO, and Dr. Larry Toy, member of the faculty at Chabot College, served as co-chairs of the group.

Beginning in January of this year, the task force met regularly to address its work and submitted a report to the Chancellor in June. Although the charge to the group was to examine and recommend funding alternatives, time constraints prohibited more than an elaboration and refinement of the 1984 report, *A Plan for Implementing a Differential Cost Funding System*, developed for the Chancellor by Dr. Glenn G. Gooder with an advisory committee pursuant to the provisions of SB 851 (Chapter 565, Statutes of 1983).

The focus of the task force effort was on general apportionments only. It was assumed that categorical programs and capital outlay will continue to be funded separately.

Widely divergent and strongly held views of some members of the group precluded concurrence on a number of important matters. Consequently, the task force report presents the conceptual structure for a program-based funding model, although significant elements and procedures have yet to be fully defined.

Nevertheless, the work of the task force does represent a bold concept that, if fully funded and implemented, could achieve major change in community college financing.

In the proposed system of program-based funding allocations, five categories of programs and services have been identified:

- instruction
- instructional services and libraries
- student services
- maintenance and operations
- institutional support

Each program category has a workload measure and a funding standard which (when fully developed) would be applied to unit cost information to fund services at a specified level of quality and workload. It is estimated by the task force that to fully fund community colleges to each program standard would have cost over $400 million in 1984-85, based on certain broad assumptions of what the standards should be.

The concept of category funding standards may require some explanation. As conceived by the task force, these standards represent the normative level of funding for each category based on some empirical calibration of constituent elements. Such standards are difficult to impossible to define at this time for each of the five program categories proposed for community colleges. As an example of the complexity, a study to establish the funding standard for maintenance and operations at the University of California and California State University has taken more than two years and cost over half a million dollars.

Further, with time and availability of accurate data, the question arises whether the same standard applies to all elements of a program category. If certain types of instruction such as remediation require a smaller class size to be effective educationally, it may be necessary to disaggregate the instruction program category to reflect such need.

Ultimately, however, consideration must be given to the optimal degree of differentiation that should be built into a model. The national trend for states that have implemented elaborately disaggregated formulas has been toward simplification. They have learned that the advantages of "precision" are simply outweighed by the difficulties of collecting and verifying the necessary data and of understanding such a system.

The gap between a program standard funding level and the actual average funding level would constitute the subject of annual budget negotiations between the Chancellor's Office and the Department of Finance. The amount of such "program improvement" funding approved in each year's budget act would determine the system's movement towards the standard. Equalization funding would be that money necessary to raise the lowest average revenue districts to the same percent of standard as other districts.

As with the Gooder Report, availability and validity of detailed cost data remain problem that will continue until the Management Information System is operational. Current data seem reasonable in the aggregate, but unexplainable variation occurs at the district level. Until these problems are resolved, implementation of a program-based funding formula is problematic and further refinement of standards or workload measures is difficult.

An overriding concern among task force members is the degree to which a program-based allocation formula can lead to categorization of expenditures with resultant

reduction in the ability of the local district governing board to manage its resources. Although there was strong sentiment expressed on both sides of the issue, the implications of this matter for the future remain unclear.

One of the changes proposed is that of redefining the student workload measure from ADA to FTES. Although still based on the student contact hour as for ADA, a full-time equivalent student (FTES) would differ from ADA in being computed without the current 0.911 factor for unexcused absence and the second census date each term.

Task Force Findings

Citing a series of conditions that have contributed to the financial instability and blurred image of the California Community Colleges:

- disrupted and volatile funding,
- ambiguous and conflicting state-level policies,
- fluctuating student enrollments,
- resultant chaotic local planning and budgeting,
- loss in constant dollar purchasing power,
- historical ties to elementary and secondary education, and
- an unsophisticated funding mechanism based on a single workload measure that fails to recognize diversity and perpetuates inattention to standards and accountability;

The Task Force argues that:

- a comprehensive funding overhaul would stop the annual ad hoc tinkering that has plagued the system for nearly 15 years;
- a new funding model could include more precise mechanisms for adjusting funding levels for changes in the costs of personnel and other resources;
- a new model could provide a better approach for recognizing how fixed costs affect financing over the longer term; and
- a system of financial support based on the costs of providing community college educational programs and services is appropriate and would permit better comparisons among California higher education systems and further the

integration of the community colleges with the remainder of the state's public higher education system.

Unlike the overall, guiding principle of the Gooder Report that the new allocation methodology should maintain "fiscal neutrality," the AB 3409 task force concluded that a program-based funding model would be functionally superior to the current system only if it were part of a broad-based effort to reform the financing of the community colleges. The reference here is to the funding implications of the program standards. It must be said, however, that a differentiated allocation mechanism can be implemented without program standards. Such a procedure would simply move districts financially from wherever they are through adjustments for COLA, growth, size, and some form of equalization, but not general program improvement, much as the current funding mechanism. This is but one of the many issues the Board will have to decide once a fully developed, program-based funding procedure is presented for further consideration.

Appendix A

Report of the AB 3409 Task Force on Community College Finance Reform

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AB 3409 directed the Chancellor's Office to convene a broad-based, short-term task force on community college financing reform. The legislation charged the task force with developing specific recommendations on:

- a new state support allocation mechanism that is sensitive to and measures the full costs associated with the delivery of community college programs and services;
- revenue adjustment components of the mechanism, which would provide for adjustments on an incremental basis for increases or decreases in workload, for equalization, for inflation, and for other legally authorized purposes;
- specific funding methodology, which would differentiate among the major categories for operating community colleges, including, but not limited to, instruction, academic support, student services, institutional support, and plant operations and maintenance;
- specific workload measures applicable for each category and subcategory.

Task Force on Community College Financing

To address the charges of AB 3409, the task force met regularly from January to June 1987. It reviewed deficiencies in the current system, examined principles of community college funding, and developed a "program-based" funding model for financing California's community colleges. As displayed by Figure 1, this model establishes five major program categories: instruction, instructional services and libraries, student services, maintenance and operations, and institutional support. It defines workload measures for each of these program categories and specifies appropriate funding standards for determining how much money should be allocated to each program category to fund a given level of workload. Based on these workload measures and funding standards, as well as information on unit costs, the model can be used to determine the allocations for each community college district in each of the five program categories. For reference, Figure 1 shows the statewide status in each category in 1984-85 compared to the proposed standards.

This approach to community college financing is consistent with the centralization of finance at the state level that has occurred since Proposition 13 and with the diverse postsecondary character of the community colleges. The model incorporates many of the features now used to finance the California State University (CSU) system and the University of California (UC). It not only will permit better comparisons with these two systems, but also will further the integration of the community colleges with the remainder of the state's public higher education system.

FIGURE 1
SUPPORT CATEGORIES, WORKLOAD MEASURES, AND STANDARDS

Support Categories	Workload Measure	Proposed Standard(s)	Current Status Percent of Proposed Standards
Instruction *(Activity Codes 0100-5900)*	Full-Time Equivalent Students (FTES)	Student:Faculty Ratio of 25:1 Faculty Mix: 75% Contract, 25% Hourly	Student:Faculty Ratio of 30:1 Faculty Mix: 62% Contract, 30% Hourly, 7% Overload, 1 Classified 80.9% of Proposed Standards
Instructional Services and Libraries *(Activity Code 6100)*	FTES	ALA/ACRL Standards for Libraries with CSU Admin. and Contract Svc. Standards Standards for Media Centers and Learning Centers to be Determined	72.6% of Proposed Standards
Student Services *(Activity Codes 6200-6400)*	Headcount Enrollment	Standard to be Determined	Not Applicable
Maintenance and Operations *(Activity Code 6500)*	Gross Square Footage and Acreage	Modified CSU Standards	Not Applicable
Institutional Support *(Activity Codes 6000,6600-6700)*	FTES	Modified CSU Standards	88% of Standards

The task force concluded that this program-based funding model would be functionally superior to the current system only if it were part of a broad-based effort to reform the financing of the community colleges. Adopting the model simply to redistribute existing resources would be counterproductive and would greatly exacerbate the fiscal dislocations that the colleges have been experiencing in recent years. The program-based funding model includes a set of standards that the task force recommends as long-run targets for community college funding, and outlines a plan that would move the colleges towards those targets as resources become available. Implementing program-based funding would require additional resources for administration and data collection at both the district and state level. If program-based funding is to be a step towards adequate and equitable funding of the community colleges, the task force believes these costs to be justified. If, on the other hand, there is no commitment on the part of Legislature and the Governor to

increased funding for the community colleges, the disadvantages of changing to a program-based funding model would outweigh the advantages.

Cost of Implementation

To understand better the impact of program-based funding on community colleges, the task force simulated the consequences of adopting program-based funding using data for 1984-85 (the most recent year for which complete data were available). The simulations estimated the overall costs of adopting different standards, examined the expenditure patterns that would result from applying these standards in each of the five program categories (how many districts would gain or lose, for example), examined the implications of applying program-based funding under fiscally neutral conditions, and calculated the costs of various hold harmless provisions.

Fully funding the standards proposed in this report for instruction, libraries, and institutional services would have cost $283 million in 1984-85. If standards had been appropriately defined for all program categories, however, the cost would have been higher. If improved standards for student services, instructional services, maintenance and operations, and instructional costs other than teaching were to increase costs by the same average percentage as the other standards, an additional $130 million would have been needed, for a total of $413 million. This would have been an additional $600 per FTES. The task force recommends that this increase be accomplished in stages. For example, instruction, reducing the ratio of full-time equivalent students (FTES) to full-time equivalent faculty (FTEF) would have cost about $22 million in 1984-85 for each unit reduction (for example, reducing the ratio from 30:1 to 29:1). Increasing the percentage of full-time contract faculty and reducing the percentage of part-time hourly faculty would have cost about $5.6 million per one percent change (for example, raising the percentage of contract faculty from a statewide average of 62 percent of 63 percent).

The costs of hold harmless - that is, ensuring that no district's expenditures would be less than in 1984-85 - depend on the proportion of the standard that is funded. If districts were all funded at the 1984-85 average, the costs of hold harmless would be approximately $108 million. As the average funding level increases, the number of districts needing to be held harmless decreases, until at the full standard, little or no hold harmless cost remains.

Next Steps

Although the task force has made substantial progress in developing a system of program-based funding, there are a number of tasks that must be accomplished before implementation would be feasible. First, appropriate standards must be developed for other instructional services and for student services, and the standards proposed for the other program categories and the procedures for handling small

sizes of colleges and districts must be refined. Second, projections of the impact of program-based funding must be redone using more recent data and, where appropriate, using three-year averages. Simulations and projections for each college and district must also be made. Third, procedures for handling noncredit FTES need more attention, and standards for noncredit activity need to be developed for each program category. Finally, before full implementation the State must develop mechanisms to deal with capital outlay, with districts with unique operations (such as television facilities), and with requirements for remedial classes and other instruction and services for students with special needs.

Summary of Recommendations

Program Categories

1) The program-based funding system initially developed for the California Community Colleges should have five major program categories: instruction, instructional services and libraries, student services, institutional support, and maintenance and operations. Subcategories should be established for instruction (credit and noncredit) and for instructional services (libraries and other instructional services).

Workload Measures

2) The workload measure for the instruction, instructional services and libraries, and institutional support categories should be the number of full-time equivalent students (FTES) enrolled at the time of the first census, with full-time equivalent student defined as 15 student contact hours per week (the normal full-time load) for 35 weeks (the number of weeks of instruction per year), which is equivalent to 525 student contact hours.

3) The workload measure for student services should be the unduplicated headcount enrollment.

4) The workload measures for maintenance and operations should be gross square footage (of district-owned and leased space) and developed and undeveloped acreage.

Funding Standards

5) Explicit funding standards should be part of the program-based funding system developed for the community colleges. Where appropriate, these standards should reflect practices established for CSU to serve similar lower division students; when CSU practices are not comparable, standards should be developed that accurately reflect the mission and circumstances of the community colleges.

6) The program-based funding system should initially have the following standards for instruction:

- a ratio of FTES to FTEF of 25:1 for credit instruction
- 75 percent FTEF for credit instruction will be contract faculty
- the statewide average for non-faculty instructional expenditures, with an alternative standard to be developed by the time of full implementation.

7) The program-based funding system should initially have the following standards for instructional services and libraries:

- for libraries, minimum standards as established by the Association of College and Research Libraries Division (a division of the American Library Association) for two-year programs as adjusted and enhanced by CSU library standards for administrative and contract services;
- for other instructional services, the statewide average expenditure per FTES in the year prior to implementation of program-based funding, with an alternative standard to be developed by the time of full implementation.

8) The program-based funding system should initially have the following standard for student services:

- the statewide average expenditure per student enrolled for student services in the year prior to implementation of program-based funding, with an alternative standard to be developed by the time of full implementation.

9) The program-based funding system should initially have the following standard for maintenance and operations:

- CSU standards modified to reflect community college situations.

10) The program-based funding system should initially have the following standard for institutional support:

- CSU standards modified to reflect community college situations.

11) Adjustments for necessary small size should be included for each program category.

12) Any additional state influence over local expenditures should be limited to 1) offering a fiscal incentive to increase the use of contract faculty for credit instruction up to 75 percent of total credit faculty FTEF and 2) requiring justification for expenditure patterns that are at odds with ranges of spending that reflect typical practice in colleges and districts of similar size and demographic composition.

Program Improvement

13) Negotiations should take place annually to determine the percentage of the standards to be funded and the sum of money to be used for program improvement through program-based funding.

14) Program improvement funds should be allocated using the "leveling up" approach, which targets new resources to districts that are farthest from the full standard.

Cost of Living Adjustments

15) Two statutory COLAs should be established, one for employee compensation (based on the California Personal Income Index) and one for non-personnel costs (based on the Implicit Price Deflator for State and Local Government Purchases of Goods and Services).

Equalization

16) Equalization should be measured by comparing the percentages of the full standard reached by districts. Districts are equalized if they are at the same percentage of the standard. Equalization should be achieved simultaneously with program improvement.

Hold Harmless

17) Districts operating at or above the negotiated standards adopted for program-based funding should be guaranteed expenditures at least equal to those of the year prior to the implementation of program-based funding. Subsequently, they should operate under the rules of growth and decline established for the funding system. Districts at or above the negotiated standards would receive funds for growth and would receive COLAs based on the amount of the standard funded, but would not receive any funds for program improvement.

18) Growth in FTES should be funded at the full percentage of standard approved by the Legislature in the year that growth occurs. Funding for decline in enrollment should also diminish at the full percentage of standard, but the impact should be spread over three years. Provision should be made for the Chancellor's Office to negotiate with the Department of Finance alternative procedures for growth and decline to reflect special circumstances.

19) Allowable growth for a district should depend on the change in the adult population, the local unemployment rate, and the number of high school graduates in the district. Provision should be made for a district to negotiate with the Chancellor's Office for a different allowable growth rate to reflect unusual circumstances.

Phasing in Implementation

20) The present system of funding should continue for 1987-88 unless additional funding is made available. If additional funding is made available, it should be used for program improvement. Implementation of program-based funding should begin in 1988-89, and full implementation should begin in 1989-90, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation for making further refinements.

21) Subsequent refinements of program-based funding should continue to assess the accuracy of available data, use three-year moving averages where this would provide a more accurate picture.

22) Additional staff should be provided for the Chancellor's Office to implement and administer program-based funding.

23) Alternatives for handling credit and noncredit activity should be more closely examined as program-based funding is developed. The desirability of distinctions in areas other than instruction should be considered.

Next Steps

24) The Task Force on Community College Financing should continue to meet to address issues related to standards for instruction other than teaching, for instructional services other than libraries, and for student services; to examine the impact of program-based funding using more recent data, including district by district simulations; to determine permissible ranges of expenditure patterns by category; and to develop procedures for handling noncredit instruction.

Appendix B

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE FINANCE
(Adopted by Task Force)

Over the past five years, several groups involved with community college issues have put forward statements of principles and/or statements of priorities for community college finance. The task force reviewed statements from 1) the Board of Governors (adopted December 1985), 2) the California Postsecondary Education Commission (adopted March 1983) the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan (adopted March 1986), 4) the Joint Legislative Committee on the Master Plan (adopted January 1987), 5) the Association of California Community Colleges Administrators (adopted November 1985 and November 1986), 6) the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (March 1986), and 7) the Office of the Legislative Analyst (February 1987).

Although there is a good deal of consistency among these statements, there is still no recent, broadly accepted statement of policy principles for community college finance that has been embraced within the community colleges, by the Legislature, and by the Governor. The task force believes that a first step in improving existing mechanisms for community college finance should be the development of a clear statement of principles that can be agreed to by all parties and put into statute. The negotiation and adoption of a specific mechanism to implement these principles, along with agreement on funding levels needed to maintain quality, should be consistent with these funding principles.

1. *Funding should be adequate to support the mission of the community colleges.*

   The Joint Committee for Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education has identified three major purposes for the community colleges: 1) providing transfer education of the highest quality for students who wish to pursue a baccalaureate degree; 2) providing quality vocational education; and 3) providing quality programs in transitional education -- that is, remedial education and English as a second language -- intended to lead to success in college and university work.[2] The funding mechanism should be sensitive to the diversity of educational programs and support services required to fulfill these missions, and the level of funding should be adequate to provide high quality programs and support services in all areas.

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[2] Joint Committee for Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, *Final Report - Community College Reform*, January 7, 1987.

2. *The funding system should reflect the postsecondary nature of the community colleges.*

The funding mechanism should be appropriate for a system of postsecondary education. Where possible, it should be comparable to the other public postsecondary systems to facilitate state-level policy and fiscal review and Master Plan evaluation.

3. *The funding system should be congruent with and supportive of the system of governance.*

The funding mechanism should also recognize and support the governance structure of the community colleges, which is characterized by shared State and local responsibility. The funding mechanism should allow for the setting state policies and priorities, but should also allow local authorities flexibility in implementation and should contain incentives to promote quality and innovation at the local level.

4. *The funding system should be sensitive to actual costs.*

The funding mechanism should provide program-based funding using a limited number of major instruction and support categories and should relate support for college operations to actual costs in each of these categories. For each of these categories, funding should be based on workload measures and funding standards that are sensitive to changes in the costs of supporting the activity and that provide incentives consistent with stated goals and objectives.

An adequate base should be established for funding the community colleges in accordance with an assessment of the actual costs of providing the programs and services required to fulfill the mission. Provision should be made for offsetting the effects of inflation and changes in workload.

5. *Funding should be stable over time.*

To avoid disruptions of local program offerings and to allow local administrators to establish policies and expenditure targets with reasonable certainty, the level of revenues should not fluctuate wildly from year to year. It is particularly important that community college districts have adequate time to adjust programs when programmatic needs change or the number of students diminishes.

While funding levels should change with enrollment changes, the method of funding such changes should provide neither a purely fiscal incentive for growth nor excessive penalities for loss of students in the short run.

6. *The funding system should provide for equity among comparable colleges and districts.*

   The funding system should, over time, reduce the differences in funding for colleges and districts that have resulted from past disparities in local wealth, tax support, or previous funding mechanisms.

7. *The funding system should be understandable and easy to communicate and should avoid undue data collection and verification costs.*

   The general concepts upon which the funding system is based should be readily understood. Although data collection and verification are necessary components of any funding system, the effort required to comply should not impose a burden that is disproportionate to the benefits gained.

8. *Student fees for state-funded programs should be kept as low as possible, and adequate financial aid should be provided.*

   As is the case for the other two public postsecondary segments, increases in students fees should be accompanied by increases in financial aid for students in the community colleges.

APPENDIX C

MEMBERS OF THE AB 3409 TASK FORCE ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE FINANCE REFORM

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